

The Vaccines for Children Program



Program Overview

Congress created the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program in 1993. Michigan began implementing the VFC program in January 1995. The goal of the VFC program is to prevent vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) and the pain, suffering, disability and death that can result from these diseases by providing immunization services to children who are unable to pay for the vaccine or the administration of vaccine.

Any licensed public or private immunization provider may enroll in Michigan's VFC program. Once enrolled, providers receive federally procured vaccines free of charge to administer to VFC-eligible children. While a VFC provider cannot charge for the cost of the vaccine, the provider may bill a vaccine administration fee no greater than \$16.75 per injection. The administration of a federally procured vaccine to a child cannot be denied due to the inability of the family to pay an administration fee.

Approximately 1,600 provider sites representing nearly 4,000 physicians are currently enrolled in Michigan's VFC program. The active participation of Michigan's immunization providers in programs offered through MDCH and LHDs has been a key factor in Michigan's success in increasing immunization levels. According to CDC National Immunization Survey (NIS) data, Michigan's immunization coverage levels have risen from 42% (for three recommended vaccines) in 1991 to 79.2% (for six recommended vaccines) in 2004.

Eligibility

Michigan's VFC program consists of two components: VFC-Basic and VFC-Expanded.

The VFC-Basic program serves children less than 19 years old who are:

- Medicaid-eligible
- Uninsured (have no health insurance)
- Alaska Native/American Indian
- Underinsured (insurance doesn't cover any of the costs of the vaccine) when immunized at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)* or Rural Health Center (RHC)

* In Michigan, local health departments (LHDs) operate under agreements that allow them to act on behalf of FQHCs for the purpose of childhood immunization.

Most of the federal funding available to Michigan for childhood immunization programs supports the VFC-Basic program.

The VFC-Expanded program uses another source of federal funds to cover underinsured children served in private provider offices. Michigan has chosen to use a portion of these funds, which are called Section 317 funds, to serve these children because it helps achieve its objective to assure that Michigan's children can receive affordable immunizations in their medical home. Due to funding restraints, not all vaccines are available for underinsured children served by private providers. Underinsured children who cannot get certain vaccines through their private providers should be referred to the LHD, a Federally Qualified Health Center or Rural Health Center for free vaccination because they qualify for the VFC-Basic program when served at these facilities.

A VFC-enrolled provider is automatically enrolled in both components of Michigan's VFC program: VFC-Basic and VFC-Expanded.

Providers serving Medicaid eligible children can obtain vaccine free of charge and may bill Medicaid a fee for vaccine administration.

Michigan Childhood Immunization Registry (MCIR)

Participation in MCIR is required by the State of Michigan (PHA 540, 1996). This mandate applies to all Michigan physicians who administer immunizations, regardless of VFC enrollment status. More information is available at www.mcir.org.

How does a provider enroll in Michigan's VFC Program?

To enroll in the VFC program, a provider should contact the immunization program at their LHD (contact information is posted at <http://malph.org>). The provider will be asked to complete a Provider Enrollment and Profile Form. Providers who want to offer varicella vaccine must also complete a Varicella Certification and Agreement Form. The LHD will provide instructions and guidance on accurate completion of each of these forms. When the enrollment is approved, the provider can begin to order vaccines and administer these vaccines to VFC-eligible children. In Michigan, the LHD is a VFC provider's primary contact for all aspects of the VFC program.

Questions and Answers about the VFC Program

What are the requirements for enrollment?

1. Order appropriate amounts of vaccine (no more than 1-2 month supply) and use the vaccines with the earliest expiration dates first. Orders should closely align with the numbers submitted on the annual Provider Profile Form. Notify LHD of vaccine stock expiring within 3 months and not expected to be used.
2. Store/handle vaccines per CDC guidance (http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/vac_mgt_book.htm)
3. Immediately contact the LHD in the event of suspected vaccine loss or for questions about vaccine storage or viability of the vaccine. MDCH expects reimbursement for VFC vaccine wasted due to negligence and/or improper vaccine storage and handling practices.
4. Provide all ACIP recommended vaccines to VFC-eligible children. Do not charge for the cost of the vaccine or charge an administration fee higher than \$16.75/injection or deny vaccine to a VFC eligible child because of an inability to pay the administration fee.
5. Administer VFC vaccines only to VFC-eligible children.
6. Account for vaccines received and administered by submitting monthly doses administered forms.
7. Document as required by Statute 42 US code 300aa-25 and CDC.
8. Screen and document VFC eligibility at each immunization visit and maintain record for 3 years.
9. Allow the LHD to conduct a VFC site visit, including giving access to 30 charts to review VFC eligibility screening and documentation, and chart reviews related to quality assurance activities.
10. Use the State's Official Certificate of Immunization (green immunization record card) or a printed record from the Michigan Childhood Immunization Registry (MCIR) to record doses of vaccine administered for the patient's personal record.
11. Provide a current VIS (Vaccine Information Statement) for each vaccine at each visit. In Michigan, each VIS must contain the MCIR statement.
12. If the patient is a Medicaid beneficiary enrolled in a qualified health plan (QHP), provide information on the beneficiary's immunization status to the QHP. For information on the QHP's requirements for immunization services, contact the QHP or refer to the contract between the provider and the QHP. For Medicaid beneficiaries not enrolled in health plans who are receiving traditional fee-for-service care, bill the Medical Services Administration for the vaccine administration fee, using the appropriate codes. For more information about Medicaid billing, contact Medicaid Information at 1-800-292-2550 or www.cms.hhs.gov.
13. Report the immunization records of the children vaccinated to the MCIR within 72 hours.
14. Share immunization data with LHDs, schools, and other medical providers according to HIPAA guidelines. Using the MCIR to share immunization records assures HIPAA compliance.
15. Routinely re-assess the quality and effectiveness of immunization practices, using the Standards for Child and Adolescent Immunization Practices as the guideline for that assessment.

Are there programs that provide affordable immunizations for adults?

Michigan has chosen to use a portion of its Section 317 funds and some limited state funds to provide affordable vaccines to certain low-income and/or high-risk adults. Access to these programs is restricted in order to effectively target these limited resources to those individuals most in need of immunization services. These programs are:

- High Risk Hepatitis B Program – provides hepatitis B vaccine to high-risk individuals less than 25 years of age, regardless of insurance status, who meet one or more of the following high risk criteria:
 - Household and/or sexual contact of a hepatitis B infected person;
 - Have had more than one sex partner in the last 6 months;
 - Have a recently acquired/diagnosed STD;
 - Have HIV;
 - Are an Injecting Drug User (IDU)

This program is only available through LHDs, STD or Family Planning Clinics and Teen Health Centers. All eligible immunization providers who are not already enrolled in VFC must complete an enrollment and profile form.

- Michigan Adult Vaccine Replacement Program (MI-VRP) – provides vaccine for uninsured and underinsured adults (19 years of age and older) served at LHDs, FQHCs, and Migrant Health Centers who meet criteria for receiving Td, IPV, MMR, hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines.

Does Michigan have a program to protect newborns from hepatitis B infection?

Michigan provides free hepatitis B vaccine to all birthing hospitals to promote the immunization of all newborns with the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine before discharge from the hospital. While free vaccine is available for all children regardless of income or insurance status, newborns must be screened for VFC eligibility. Hospitals must report these newborn hepatitis B vaccinations to MCIR. All eligible immunization providers who are not already enrolled in VFC must complete an enrollment and profile form.

For more information

For additional information on the VFC program, visit the VFC homepage at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/nip/vfc or contact the immunization program at your local health department.

Free Immunization Update Opportunities for Physicians and Staff

VFC enrollees are encouraged to take advantage of several programs available through MDCH and local health departments. Together with VFC, the following programs function to protect the health of all Michigan children by assuring the availability of affordable, timely and appropriate immunization services.

- Assessment, Feedback, Incentives, eXchange (AFIX)
Immunization Quality Improvement Review
Stephanie Sanchez
517-335-9011
sanchezs@michigan.gov
- Physician, Nurse, Office Staff Education/Updates
Carlene Lockwood
517-335-9070
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- Hepatitis A-E Update
Pat Fineis
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